

September 22, 2003

The Honorable Joseph Schmitz
Department of Defense
1000 Defense, The Pentagon
Washington DC 20301-1000

Dear Inspector General Schmitz,

In light of the recent arrest of Muslim chaplain Captain James Yee, I would like an update on the request I made to you in my letter of March 10th, 2003 asking for an investigation of the groups the Pentagon uses to select Muslim chaplains to serve in the armed services. As I wrote to you in March, I fully support the teaching and worship of Islam in the military but want to ensure that the groups in charge of such activities are of the highest caliber, have unimpeachable reputations, and endorse religious pluralism so that Muslims of all sects are able to follow their faith.

As you are aware, when selecting Muslim clerics to minister to soldiers, the Defense Department relies solely on two organizations – the Graduate School for Islamic Social Sciences and the American Muslim Armed Forces and Veterans Affairs Council (AMAFVAC), a subgroup of the American Muslim Foundation (AMF) – to approve candidates as qualified religious leaders.

Both of these groups, however, appear to have a number of disturbing connections to terrorism. The GSISS and the AMF are both under investigation as part of U.S. Customs' operation Green Quest for their possible role in helping to funnel \$20 million to terrorists through offshore financial institutions. The AMAFVAC itself was responsible for selecting Captain Yee as a Muslim military chaplain.

Experts, including Professor Ali Asani of Harvard University and Stephen Schwartz, author of the highly praised *Two Faces of Islam*, indicate that these groups are funded generously by Saudi Arabia and consequently hew closely to the religious tenets of the radical Wahhabi/Salafi sect of Islam, Saudi Arabia's official state religion. Far from promoting a pluralist approach to the world, Wahhabi/Salafi Islam is widely acknowledged to be exclusionary and extreme, denigrating not only other religions but also other forms of Islamic belief held by Shi'a and moderate Sunni Muslims.

It is disturbing that organizations with possible terrorist connections and religious teachings contrary to American pluralistic values hold the sole responsibility for Islamic instruction in our armed forces. It is certainly disappointing given that there are numerous American Muslim organizations with pristine reputations who are able to perform such activities.

Captain Yee's arrest and his connection to the AMAFVAC only underscores the need for a comprehensive investigation of these groups. On March 11th, 2003 John Crane from your office wrote me indicating that you were examining these issues and I am eager to hear what you have uncovered in the six months that have passed since that letter. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Charles Schumer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Charles Schumer
U.S. Schumer